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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 A-01 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00
OPR-02 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 AID-05 /089 W
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O P 101522Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2494
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 181
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
CIA WASHDC
COMSIXTHFLT
COMPHIBRON SIX
COM THREE FOUR MAU
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 8801

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION DECEMBER 9-10

REF: BEIRUT 8756 (DTG 081544Z DEC 76)

1. SUMMARY. SALIM AL-HUSS DESIGNATED PRIME MINISTER DEC 8 AND NEW CABINET NAMED DEC 9. MOST LEADERS SUPPORT NEW GOVERNMENT, THOUGH SOME SKEPTICAL AND SOME RESERVING OPINIONS. PLO CENTRAL COMMITTEE MET DEC 9; PALESTINIAN
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CONVOY OF 60 VEHICLES HEADING FOR BEQAA FROM NORTH.

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FIGHTING CONTINUES IN SOUTH WITH HEAVY SHELLING OF
BOTH RIGHTIST AND PALESTINIAN/LEEFTIST AREAS. SHOOTING
INCIDENTS CONNINUE, INCLUDING FIRE DIRECTED AT EDDE'S
RESIDENCE, CLASHES WITH ASF AND EXPLOSIONS IN TRIPOLI
AND BAALBEK. GUARDIANS OF THE CEDAR LEADER STATES HARD-
LINE CONDITIONS FOR TURNOVER OF HIS GROUP'S WEAPONS.
INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE ELEMENTS STRUGGLING TO REORGANIZE.
AUB PRESIDENT DENIES AUB ESTABLISHING SEPARATE FACULTIES
IN EAST BEIRUT. LEBANESE BANKING ASSOCIATION DISCUSSES
REOPENING OF BANKING FACILITIES IN LEBANON. ESSO UNDE-
CEDED ON WHETHER TO RESUME OPERATIONS IN LEBANON. COMMERCIAL
CENTER MERCHANTS' LOSSES ESTIMATED AT DOLS FOUR
BILLION. POSTAL SYSTEM BEGINS TO REVIVE. MORE
AMBASSADORS RETURN. NETHERLANDS PROVIDING AID. MORE
AIRLINE OPERATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. NEW CABINET. PRESIDENT SARKIS DESIGNATED SALIM AL-HUSS
AS PRIME MINISTER DEC 8 AND NEW CABINET ANNOUNCED DEC 9.
IN ADDITION TO SERVING AS PRIME MINISTER, AL-HUSS WILL
HEAD MINISTRIES OF ECONOMY AND CCMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND
PETROLEUM, AND INFORMATION. OTHER CABINET MEMBERS ARE:
FUAD BOUTROS, VICE PREMIER, MIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MIN DEFENSE;

SLAH SALMAN, MIN INTERIOR, MIN HOURSING AND COOPERATIVES;
IBRAHIM CHEATIO, MIN HEALTH, MIN WATER RESOURCES AND
ELECTRICITY; AMIN BIZRI, MIN TRANSPORTATION, MIN TOURISM,
MIN PUBLIC WORKS; MICHEL DOUMIT, MIN PLANNING; ASSAD
RIZK, MIN SOCIAL AFFAIRS, MIN EDUCATION, MIN AGRICULTURE;
FARID RAPHAEL, MIN JUSTICE, MIN FINANCE , MIN COMMUNICATIONS.
MINISTERS ASSUME OFFICE IMMEEDIATELY WITH PRESUMPTION THAT,
WHEN/IF PARLIAMENT MEETS, IT WILL HAVE OPPORTUNITY PASS
VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAS ALREADY
DECIDED TO ATTEND ARAB FONMINS CONFERENCE TO CONVENE
JAN 15 IN CAIRO. PRESS SPECULATING FIRST ACTIONS OF NEW
GOVERNMENT TO INCLUDE: 1) DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMER-
GENCY, INCLUDING PRESS CENSORSHIP; 2) REQUEST TO
PARLIAMENT TO GRANT EXTRAORDINARY POWERS TO INSTITUTE
LEGISLATION; 3) APPOINTMENT OF NEW ARMY COMMANDER. WE
UNDERSTAND FROM VARIOUS MILITARY SOURCES MOST LIKELY NEW
COMMANDER IS GABY LAHOUD.
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3. REACTIONS TO CABINET APPOINTMENTS. KAMAL JUNBLATT
TTAKING COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE, STRESSING NECESSITY OF LEAVING
PRESIDENT SARKIS "FREE TO ACT." WHILE AN NAHAR SAYS
CAMILLE CHAMOUN APPROVED OF NEW CABINET, WITH QUALIFICATION
HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED CABINET OF POLITICIANS,
L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTS CHAMOUN HOSTILE, PARTICULARLY
TO AL-HUSS, WHOSE APPOINTMENT HE CHARACTERIZED AS "VERY

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GRAVE," AND BOUTROS. HIS NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY EXPRESSED
RESERVATIONS, WITH FINNAL POSITION TO BE ANNOUNCED LATER.
PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL, HOWEVER, WISHED CABINET
SUCCESS, EMPHASIZING "NO RECONSTRUCTION WITHOUT SECURITY"
AND PHALANGE APPEARS TO CONTINUE ITS STRONG SUPPORT OF
SARKIS.

4. PALESTINIANS. YASSIR ARAFAT PRESIDED PLO CNETRAL
COMMITTEE MEETING DEC 9 ATTENDED BY ALL ELEMENTS EXCEPT
PFLP TO DISCUSS PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON, RELATIONS
WITH ARAB COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS. NO COMMENT
MADE ON NEW LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. BEIRUT PRESS REPORTS
PALESTINIAN CONVOY OF 60 MILITARYY VEHICLES DEPARTED NAHR
AL-BARED CAMP DEC 8, HEADED FOR SOUTHERN BEQAA AND ACCOM-
PANIED BY ASF UNIT. AL MUHARRIR SPECULATES MOVEMENT ATTEMPTING
AVOID "INTER-GUERRILLA" FRICTION IN WAKE OF DEC 5 FATAH-
SAIQA CLASHES AT NAHR AL-BARED. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTS
ESTABLISHMENT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF CLAP, PFLP, AND
SAIQA ELEMEETS TO INVESTIGATE DEC 5 INCIDENTS. L'ORIENT-
LE JOUR ALSO SAYS SOME OF 20 PALESTINIAN HEAVY ARTILLERY
ANN ANTI-AIRCRAFT PIECES REMOVED FROM EASTERN LEBANON TO
BE RELOCATED IN THE ARQUB. PRESS SPECULATING PALESTINIAN
RELOCATING IN BORDER AREA IS PART OF IMPLEMENTATION ARAB
SSUMMIT RESOLUTIONS AND 1969 CAIRO ACCORDS.

5. SECURITY IN THE SOUTH. RIGHTISTS IN RMAYSH AND AYN
IBL SHELLED LAA POSITIONS DEC 8 IN TALAT MASUD, BINT YAHUN,
RECHASS, AND SAF AL-HAWA AND NEIGHBORING AREAS OF TIRI
AND AYNATA, AND LAA RETURNED FIRE. ISRAELI ARTILLERY
REPORTEDLY ALSO HIT BINT JBAYL, MAZRAIT, YARINE, MIRWAHIN,
AND DAHIRA IN THE TYRE DISTRICT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LEBANESE
MILITARY OFFICIALS ASSOCIATED WITH ASF BELIEVE THAT NEITHER
THE SUDANESE NOR THE SAUDIS WOULD BE EFFECTIVE SOUTH OF THE
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LITANI: SAUDIS ARE BELIEVED MILITARILY INEFFECTIVE AND
SUDANESE ARE TOO SYMPATHETIC IDEOLOGICALLY WITH PALESTINIANS.
BEIRUT PRESS NOTES ISRAELI PRIMIN RABIN VISITED ISRAELI-
LEBANESE BORDER DEC 9.

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COM THREE FOUR MAU
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 8801

6. SECURITY SITUATION ELSEWHERE. MACHINE GUN FIRE DIRECTED DEC 8-9 AT RAYMOND EDDE'S WEST BEIRUT RESIDENCE, WHICH EDDE IMPLIED ORIGINATED FROM ASF STATIONED IN NEARBY MIN INFORMATION BUILDING. ASF FORCES REPORTED FIRE DIRECTED AT SAME TIME AT ONE OF THEIR UNITS NEARBY. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTS SHOOT-OUT DEC 8 IN VILLAGE OF MINIARA IN THE AKKAR, AFTER WHICH ASF APPREHENDED SIX PERSONS. PAPERS REPORT THREE EXPLOSIONS IN BAALBEK DEC 8 AND "HUGE" EXPLO-SION IN TRIPOLI DEC 9. SKIRMISH REPORTED FOR FIRST TIME BETWEEN GUARDIANS OF THE CEDAR MEMBERS AND ASF ON DEC 8
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IN JUNIYAH.

7. WEAPONS TURNOVER. ABU ARZ, GUARDIANS OF THE CEDAR LEADER, DECLARED DEC 9 HIS GROUP WOULD NOT HAND OVER WEAPONS TO THE ASF, EXCEPT UNDER FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

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1) COMPLETE TURNOVER OF ALL HEAVY AND LIGHT WEAPONS BY
PALESTINAISNS; 2) DEPARTURE OF ALL PALESTINIANS FROM LEBANON;
3) DEPARTURE OF ALL FOREIGN (PRESUMABLY SYRIAN) ARMIES
FROM LEBANON; AND 4) CREATION OF "GIANT" LEBANESE ARMY.

8. INTERNAL SECURITY FORCE (ISF). COL ANTOINE DAHDAH,
DIRGEN SURETE GENERALE (THE MINISTRY OF INTERIRO'S DOMESTIC
INTELLIGNECE AND COUNTERY-SUBVERSION ORGANIZATION) PRESIDED
MEETING DEC 8 AND ANNOUNCED PROMOTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS. PRESS
OBSERVES THAT SURETE GENERAL IS FIRST PUBLIC INSTITUTION TO BE
REUNIFIED. ISF DIREGEN, HISHAM SHAAR, REQUESTED MILITARY VEHICLES
FROM ASF IN ORDER TO RESUME OPERATIONS AND HAS ALSO DECIDED
TO PURCHASE NEW COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT. ISF
DIRECTOR ALSO REPORTED SEARCHING FOR A PRISON, SINCE MOST
FORMER PRISONS WERE DESTROYED.

9. UNIVERSITIES. JAMES COWAN, ACTING PRESIDENT OF AUB
DEC 8 DENIED RUMORS THAT AUB ESTABLISHING SEPARATE
FACULTIES IN EAST BEIRUT AND SAID STEPS THAT HAD BEEN
TAKEN TO ESTABLISH CLASSES IN EAST BEIRUT WERE "STRICTLY
EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES." AT UNIVERSITY OF LEBBNON, CONTROVERSY
CONTINUES: PHALANGE NEWS AGENCY REPORTED PRESIDENT
NAIM TOOK STEPS DEC 8 TO FACILITATE ESTABLISHMENT OF
SEPARATE FACILITIES IN EAST BEIRUT, WHICH GENERATED WAVE
OF CRITICISM ON DEC 9.

10. BANKERS. LEBANESE BANKING ASSOCIATION MET DEC 9.
PRESIDENT JOSEPH GEAGEA DENIED BANKS WILL REOPEN DEC 15 AS
PREVIOUSLY REPORTED IN PRESS. ASSOCIATION DISCUSSED SALIM
AL-HUSS' PLAN PROPOSING THAT BANKS ENCOUNTERING INSURMOUNTABLE
DIFFICULTIES BE LIQUIDATED OR MERGED AND ISSUED
STATEMENT THAT BANKS WOULD "CONTINUE TO HHONOR THEIR COMMITMENTS
UNDER EXISTING AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACTS." CITY BANK
RESUMED OPERATIONS DEC 10 IN TWO LOCATIONS, ONE IN WEST
BEIRUT AND OTHER NEAR JUNIYAH, AND BANK OF AMERICA MAY SOON
FOLLOW SUIT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF CHICAGO IS ALREADY
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IN OPERATION.

11. RETURN OF FOREIGN BUSINESSES. ESSO REPRESENTATIVE
VISITING BEIRUT DISCUSSED WITH GHASSAN TUEINI STATUS OF
ESSO COMPANY, WHICH SINCE SEP 1 HAS BEEN IN CUSTODY OF
GOL. WE UNDERSTAND ESSO OPTIMISTIC IT CAN ACHIEVE OVERALL
SETTLEMENT WITH ITS LABOR UNION AND GOL, BUT STILL UNDECIDED
WHETHER TO CLOSE OPERATION THEREAFTER OR RESUME OPERATIONS
WHICH WOULD REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE REINVESTMENT.

12. BEIRUT COMMERCIAL CENTER. PRESIDENT OF ASSOCIATION
OF MERCHANTS OF BEIRUT, VICTOR CSSIR, ESTIMATES TOTAL

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LOSSES TO BEIRUT MERCHANTS AT DOLS FOUR BILLION, TO INCLUDE PHYSICAL DAMASGE, LOSSES OF MERCHANDISE (INCLUDING THAT UNDER CUSTOMS CONTROL), AND LOSSES TO THE GOVERNMENT IN REVENUES. PRESIDENT OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ADNAN KASSAR, ESTIMATES IT WILL TAKE THREE YEARS TO REBUILD HOTEL DISTRICT AND FIVE YEARS TO REBUILD OTHER PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS IN THE CITY. ELECTRICITY AVAILABLE TO COMMMRCIAL CENTER DEC 8 FOR FIRST TIME IN EVERAL MONTHS. SHOP OWNERS AND BUSINESSMEN RETURNING TO RESUME WORK OR REPAIR DAMAGE.

13. POSTAL SERVICE RESUMING. POSTMEN RESUMED ACTIVITIES DEC 8 BY DISTRIBUTING LETTERS ACCUMULATED DURING PAST MONTHS. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTS POSTAL SYSTEM WILL REVIVE FIRST IN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT. LATER PHASES WILL SEE REVIVAL OF DISTRIBUTION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND TO COUNTRIES ABROAD.

14. OTHER SIGNS OF NORMALIZATION. FOREIGN AMBASSADORS CONTINUE TO RETURN TO LEBANON, INCLUDING THOSE FROM AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, ALGERIA, AND THE NETHERLANDS. THE NETHERLANDS HAS GRANTED SOME DOLS TWO MILLION IN AID TO LEBANON THROUGH THE UN AND FAO. ALITALIA ANNOUNCED IT WILL RESUME FLIGHTS FROM ROME TO BEIRUT JAN 1 AND THAT BEIRUT WOULD ONCE AGAIN BECOME ITSS OPERATIONS CENTER FOR THE MIDDLE EAST.
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